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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHIANG MAI 000173

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 7/19/2015

TAGS: [PREF TH LA PGOV PHUM PINR](#)

SUBJECT: MAE RIM HMONG LINKED TO LAOS, U.S.

CLASSIFIED BY: Bea Camp, Consul General, Consulate Chiang Mai, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (SBU) Summary: Lost in the bigger news of over 6,000 Hmong seeking refuge in Petchabun province, a much smaller group has settled into a f district, Chiang Mai province. This group reportedly hopes to With one exception, Thai media have been silent on these 42 Hmong, reportedly part of a group with connections to former General Vang Pao that decades. End summary

12. (SBU) While over 6,000 Hmong at Ban Huay Nam Khao, Phetchabun province are making daily headlines with their efforts to stay in Thailand or obtain the legal status in Thailand they claim to have once been promised by contacts in the Royal Thai Army/Internal Security Operations Comma

13. (U) Wat Tham Krabok in Saraburi housed thousands of Hmong refugees for many years until March 31, when the site was officially closed for a resettled to the U.S. As of mid-July about 2,800 Hmong remained in the Tham Krabok community.

--From Tham Krabok to Mae Rim--

14. (U) The 42 Hmong now in Mae Rim turned down the opportunity for U.S. resettlement, apparently with the hope of obtaining Thai citizenship. Hmong resettled." The paper subsequently reported that the army had asked Esserbert to remove the "Khum Naresuan" sign as a possible offense to the monarchy. However, two weeks later, the sign remains

15. (C) Consulate's National Intelligence Agency (NIA) contacts have expressed concern over this Hmong move and in particular over the role pla

--The Spirit of King Naresuan--

16. (C) Esserbert, also known as "Win" or "Bert", claims a close connection with the Hmong group under the legendary General Vang Pao and with Savetsila. Esserbert is also said to channel King Naresuan, a Thai warrior king who liberated Ayutthaya from Burma 400 years ago. As part of this identity, Esserbert has renamed the former Erawan Resort t

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17. (C) The organization Esserbert now heads, the Thai Highlanders Foundation, once provided accommodation for hill tribe youths, students and

18. (C) The foundation's recent activities have drawn the attention of government authorities who say that Khum Naresuan serves as a center f counterparts in Thailand. Currently, Khum Naresuan hosts not only the 42 Hmong from Tham Krabok who are waiting for Thai citizenship but also about 150 more adults and children whose origins are unknown,

--Moving Hmong from Laos -

19. (C) Our NIA contacts believe that the developments in Phetchabun's Ban Huay Nam Khao area have been engineered by the group from Khum Nare Hmong resettlement program. Reportedly this involves persuading Lao Hmong to flee to Thailand, arranging cross-border logistics, and coaching travelers -- the elderly are instructed to say they wc

110. (C) NIA contacts describe the group as a legacy of the old Thai military mentality in which ethnic minorities were cultivated for use in c Once a group's military mentors/bosses were no longer in power, these one-time warriors were left with little but empty promises. These contacts also believe that the Khum Naresuan group and its U.S. connections - notably one of Gen. Wang Pao's sons who runs a real estate business in St. Paul, Minnesota - is behind an effc resettlement program. According to this theory, the more Hmong residents at the relocation site, the more leverage Esserbert and his colleagues have to tap donations from overseas Hmong communities.

--Vang Pao Foundation --

111. (C) NIA contacts state that General Vang Pao's son Vang Cha is a frequent visitor to Thailand and to this location. Vang Cha's property development business in Minnesota reportedly involves arranging both living and burial places for Hmong families resettled in the U.S. The same sources relate that the Vang Pao Foundation, in which the son is involved, is under FBI scrutiny. These contacts clearly hope that the FBI will come up with some answers to the situation and share them with the NIA.

112. (SBU) After complaints in February from the local community, the district authorities of Mae Rim raided the resort and arrested the 42 Hn Esserbert was charged with harboring illegal aliens as well as forest encroachment. These cases are still pending, along with another suit disputing Esserbert's ownership of the resort.

113. (C) In June, a request by Esserbert to the Mae Rim District Office to approve the civil registration for the 32 Hmong men resident at Kh

114. (C) Comment: Despite pending lawsuits and various suspicions about the activities of the Mae Rim Hmong, local authorities are wary of th ISOC and Thai military connections. Unable or unwilling to do a full investigation themselves, our NIA contacts would dearly like the FBI to turn up information about the group that would shed light on lin

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